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Identical letters dated 24 December 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to write to you for a second time in as many days regarding the deteriorating situation in southern Israel caused by unrelenting terrorist attacks.

Today, more than 60 rockets and mortars hit civilian population centres, including the cities and town of Ashkelon, Netivot and Sderot, as well as the kibbutzim of Nirim, Nahal Oz and Kerem Shalom. These rockets and mortars have targeted civilians in private houses, public buildings, offices, playgrounds and other populated areas in a deliberate effort to sow death, terror and injury. Instead of gathering in celebration in town halls and community centres with family and friends for the annual Chanukah festival, the residents of southern Israel are compelled to gather in bomb shelters.

Let me also mention that today, more than 40 trucks laden with supplies were supposed to be transferred to the Gaza Strip on behalf of the World Food Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Palestinian Ministry of Health and other agencies. However, as a direct result of today's dangerous onslaught of rockets and mortars, those transfers will not reach their intended destination. Clearly, it is Hamas who bears full responsibility for the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

While Israel is demonstrating remarkable restraint, it has — as I mentioned in my previous letter — the right to protect itself in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Israel has the right and the duty to safeguard the lives, the security and the well-being of its citizens.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gabriela **Shalev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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